

Remarks at a South Dakota Republican Party Rally in Sioux Falls April 24, 2002

The President. Thank you all very much. Thank you very much; thank you for that warm welcome. I'm really glad I came back to South Dakota. John said to me, he said, "Well, you might want to come over to South Dakota. A few of my friends might show up." [Laughter] I want to thank all of you for coming.

I'm here for a couple of reasons. First, I'm here because I firmly believe that John Thune should be the next United States Senator from South Dakota. And I'm here to thank the people of this good State who work so hard for the Republican Party, who know that our party represents strength and compassion, that we trust the people of America. I want to thank those of you who man the phones and lick the envelopes, who carry the signs. I want to thank the grassroots support that are so incredibly important not only for making sure our point of view is heard but incredibly important part of our democracy. Your job of turning out the vote and talking to the neighbors and going to the coffee shops and spreading the word is incredibly important. And it's going to be an important reason why John Thune gets elected next November.

I want to thank John's wife, Kimberley, for making the sacrifice necessary to—for her husband to run for this high office. John and I share something in common; that is, we both married above ourselves. [Laughter] My regret is that my wife, Laura, isn't with me here tonight. But I will tell you, I am incredibly proud of this fine soul. She is doing a great job as the First Lady for our country.

Audience member. [Inaudible]—in South Dakota!

The President. I had the honor of serving as the Governor of my State, and while I was the Governor, I got to know the Governor of your State. He is—he's one of a kind. [Laughter] I'm proud to be with

my old Governor friend, and I know you're proud of the job he's doing as your Governor. I also want to thank the first lady, Mary Dean, as well.

I want to thank the party chairman, Joel Rosenthal. I want to thank the national committeeman, the national committeewoman. I want to thank you all.

This is a—this is a really large crowd. [Laughter] It says something about the vitality of our message, and it says something about the strength of our candidate for the United States Senate. Here's what I like about John. I like his values. I respect his intellect. I appreciate his dedication to hard work and his desire to get things done in Washington, DC, on behalf of the citizens of South Dakota. He's not afraid to stand up for what he believes, and it's refreshing to hear his voice amongst the shrill partisans in Washington, DC. He's a steady hand, and he's a man with whom I can work.

We've worked on big issues thus far. One of the most important issues we worked on was making sure the people of South Dakota and America got to keep more of their hard-earned dollars. When it comes time to spending money in Washington, DC, both of us understand the money we're spending is not the Government's money. The money we're spending is the people's money. And we cut your taxes right at the right time.

You know, our economy was floundering. When I went into office, the economy was grinding down, and that deeply troubled me. Anytime somebody in this country wants to work and they can't find a job, I'm troubled by that. But I understood this economic fact: If you let people keep their own money, they're going to spend it; they're going to demand something. And when they demand a good or a service, somebody is going to produce a good or

a service. And when somebody produces that good or service, that means somebody is going to find work. The tax cuts we passed, in spite of some of the big spenders in Washington, DC, helped this economy get back on its feet.

And we need a good farm bill out of Congress. We don't need any more politics with the farm bill. Let's get a farm bill on my desk that makes sense for the South Dakota farmers. Farming is an incredibly important part of this national economy of ours. It's important to understand that good farm policy is not only good for the economy; it's good for out national security as well. Thank goodness we can feed our people in America.

And what's bad for our national security is that we are too dependent on foreign sources of crude oil. We're too dependent on sources of energy from some countries that don't particularly care for America. And one way to help reduce that dependency is to promote, encourage value-added processing with America products such as ethanol.

I told the people—I told the people when I was running, I was for ethanol. And a lot of people said, "Well, he's from Texas. He's not for ethanol." Listen, I'm the President of everybody, and I understand what it means to be reliant upon somebody else's energy. There's plenty of room for ethanol in the energy mix in America. We must have it. We must have it for the good of our farm economy; we must have it for the good of our air; and we must have it for the national security reasons of the United States of America.

My view about trade is this: If you're good at something, you ought to promote it. And one of the things we're good at is raising meat and growing crops. America has got a competitive advantage when it comes to our agriculture. We grow more than we need here in America, and therefore, we ought to have policy that helps us feed the world. I want free trade, and I want fair trade. The House has passed

a trade promotion authority, and so should the United States Senate.

And the good news is, John Thune understands that. And he also understands this, that our party has been compassionate. We've been conservative, but we have been compassionate when it comes to issues like welfare reform. One of the great successes in recent history has been the welfare reform law, which says if you're dependent upon Government, it's hard to realize your dreams. Listen, we'll help people who cannot help themselves. But we have reduced dependency upon Government as a result of encouraging and training and insisting that people go to work.

There is a welfare reform reauthorization coming up; in other words, we've got to rewrite the bill. I want to make sure someone like John Thune is elected to the Senate so that if that bill gets reauthorized when he's a Senator, there will be a voice for reason and compassion, a voice that understands, with a job you find dignity, and a voice who will join me in promoting family and marriage in the welfare reform bill.

Like the farmers here, I'm kind of an early morning fellow. I get up every morning; I take old Barney and Spot outside. [Laughter] Spot then joins me in the Oval Office. After all, she was born in the White House and is used to the trappings there. Barney's only a year and a half, so he doesn't spend much time inside the Oval Office. After all, we've got a new rug in there. [Laughter]

I walk in the office; I sit behind a desk that has been used by Presidents ranging from the Roosevelts to Kennedy to Reagan, and I read a threat assessment. I read a list of potential threats to our country, and it reminds me that my most important job is to do everything in my power to protect the American people, that my most important job is to make sure that the enemy doesn't hit us again.

And we're making progress. I want you to know that we take this notion of homeland security very seriously. Today I was

visiting with your Governor, and he explained to me what South Dakota is doing. I'm most impressed with his leadership on this issue. You need to know that we follow every single lead. If we hear somebody might want to hurt us, we're running them down.

We're making sure our borders are more secure. Here in America, we're a welcoming society. But we want to know who's coming in, and we want to know who's going out.

As part of our homeland defense strategy, we're spending money and working closely with our first-responders, the brave police and fire and EMS teams all across America. We want to be prepared in America, and we've got a strategy to do just that. And for those of you who wear the uniform who are here tonight, I want to thank you on behalf of a grateful nation.

We take the threat of bioterrorism very seriously here in America, and we've got a strategy to deal with that.

What I'm telling you is, we're doing everything in our power to protect the American people. But the surest way to protect the American people is to chase the killers down one by one and bring them to justice.

I can't imagine what was going through the minds of the killers when they attacked America. I guess they must have thought that this was a soft nation, that we were so self-absorbed, so materialistic, so weak that all we were going to do was to file a lawsuit. [*Laughter*] They found out we think differently here in America. They found out that when it comes to the defense of our freedoms—the freedom to worship, the freedom to speak, the freedom to assemble, freedom of the press—that we're a mighty nation, and if threatened, we will respond.

I can't tell you how proud I am of the United States military. For those of you who have got relatives in the military, you thank them on behalf of a grateful nation and a grateful Commander in Chief.

The world is also finding out that when America says something, we mean it, that when we say we're going to do something, we're going to follow through. Early on, I said to the world that either you're with us, or you're against us. The good news is, a lot of the world is with us, and for that we're grateful. I also said, "If you harbor a terrorist, if you feed a killer, if you hide a killer, you're just as guilty as the killers." And the Taliban regime in Afghanistan found out exactly what we meant.

It is so important for Americans, particularly young Americans, to understand that this Nation does not seek revenge; we seek justice. And when we went into Afghanistan, our military and our coalition partners did not go in as conquerors; we went in as liberators. We freed people from the clutches of one of the most barbaric regimes in the history of mankind. In so doing—in so doing, we opened up schools for the first time for many young girls. I am proud of the efforts. I'm proud of our steadfast resolve, our determination, our unity, and I'm proud of the values that our country holds dear. You see, we value the worth of every single individual, regardless of their religion, regardless of their status.

I have submitted a budget to Congress—and I'm so proud that John is supporting this budget—that makes the defense of our country the number one priority. It's a significant increase in the defense budget. It's the largest increase since Ronald Reagan, and I have done so for two reasons. One, anytime this Nation commits our young to battle, anytime we put our troops in harm's way, they must have the best equipment, the best training, the best possible support from the Government of the United States of America. And I have submitted a significant increase because it is an indication of the struggles ahead. It is a signal to the world that the United States is in this war for the long haul.

I don't have a calendar on my desk that says, by such-and-such a moment this war

will end. I don't operate under false deadlines. And I know the nature of the enemy; they're coldblooded killers. And we have no choice but to defend ourselves and defend our friends by hunting them down.

The second phase of the war after Afghanistan is to deny sanctuary, training bases, or recruitment facilities for any one of these killers. To put it bluntly, we're treating them like they are: international criminals. And we've got them on the run, and we're hunting them down one person at a time. There is no cave deep enough for this patient Nation. They think they can run, and they think they can hide, but they're going to be sorely disappointed.

Our war against terror is more than just a person; it is more than just a network. We understand that history has called us to defend freedom so that people can grow up in a free society, not only in America but around the world. And so I want you to know that when I talk about an axis of evil, I mean it. We will not allow the world's most dangerous regimes to harbor and develop the world's most dangerous weapons. History has given us a chance to rise up, and rise up we will, in the defense of those values we hold dear.

And so I want to thank my fellow citizens here in South Dakota and all around America for their—for their unity and purpose and resolve. I truly believe that by being firm and tough, we can achieve peace. That's what I want. I want lasting peace. I want peace not only for America; I want peace for regions of the world that are plagued by terror. I want peace so people can grow up and realize their God-given potential. I believe that when America fulfills its duty and honors the mission, that peace is more likely to come.

And I also know that out of this terrible evil done to America can come incredible good. People oftentimes ask me, "What can I do to help?" And my answer is this: Love your neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself; if you want to fight evil, do some good. You see, it's the collective

action of millions of acts of kindness that take place every day in America that truly defines the character of our country and allows us to stand squarely in the face of evil.

If you want to help your country, mentor a child. If you want to help your country, go to your church or synagogue and mosque and rally good people to feed the homeless. If you want to help your country, remember there are pockets of despair and loneliness that can be solved by somebody putting their arm around somebody and saying, "I love you." This country has risen to its task, because not only do we defend our values but because we're a nation full of great hearts and kind souls and decent people.

I believe out of this evil will come incredible good. I believe America is beginning to realize the importance of serving something greater than yourself in life, the importance of recognizing that as you serve something greater than yourself in life, you serve your country.

That lesson came home so clear. I think the young here, when they read the history of 9/11, should remember what took place on Flight 93. People getting on an airplane thought they were just going through an average day of travel. They were told the plane served as a—was serving as a weapon. They were told what was on the ground. A couple of people got on the phone and told their wives and loved ones goodbye, they loved them. They said a prayer. One guy said, "Let's roll." And they drove the plane to the ground to save lives.

It's the American—it is that spirit, it is that ultimate sacrifice, that sense of personal responsibility which is helping to change this Nation. You see, the culture says, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else." There's a new awakening here in America that says, "Each of us are responsible for the decisions we make in life"—that we are responsible—that if you are a mom or a dad, you're responsible

for loving that child with all your heart and all your soul, and if you're a good citizen, you're responsible for loving a neighbor. And that's what's happening in America.

This is a great country. I can't tell you how optimistic I am about the future of our land. I'm optimistic that we'll achieve peace. I'm optimistic that we will stand squarely in the face of evil, with acts of kindness and decency. And I'm optimistic that this country will remain the most hopeful place on the face of the Earth.

It is an honor, a high honor, to be the President of the greatest land on the face of the Earth. Thank you for giving me that privilege. May God bless you all. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:33 p.m. at the Sioux Falls Arena. In his remarks, he referred to senatorial candidate John Thune; Gov. William J. Janklow of South Dakota and his wife, Mary Dean Janklow; and Joel Rosenthal, chairman, Ron Schmidt, national committeeman, and Mary Jean Jensen, national committeewoman, South Dakota Republican Party.

Remarks Following Discussions With Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia and an Exchange With Reporters in Crawford, Texas *April 25, 2002*

The President. Good afternoon. I was honored to welcome Crown Prince Abdullah to my ranch, a place that is very special for me and a place where I welcome special guests to our country. The Crown Prince and I had a very cordial meeting that confirmed the strong relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States of America.

Our partnership is important to both our nations. And it is important to the cause of peace and stability in the Middle East and the world. We discussed the critical importance of the war on terror. Much of our discussion centered on the Middle East and how to defuse the current situation so we can get back on the path to peace.

Our two nations share a vision of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. I reiterated that all parties have responsibilities to help achieve that vision. The Palestinian Authority must do more to stop terror. Israel must finish its withdrawal, including resolution of standoff—standoffs in Ramallah and Bethlehem, in a nonviolent way.

We discussed the need for Arab states to condemn terror, to stop incitement of violence, and as part of a long-term peace, to accept Israel as a nation and a neighbor. We also agreed the world must join in offering humanitarian aid to the many innocent Palestinians who are suffering.

I told the Crown Prince how much I appreciate his vision for a peaceful and integrated Middle East and how I appreciated his leadership in helping rally the Arab world toward that vision. I also appreciated the Crown Prince's assurance that Saudi Arabia condemns terror.

The Crown Prince is going to be in America for several more days, and officials from both our Governments will be continuing our discussions with the hope that our efforts can help return us to the path of peace—a lasting peace.

I'll answer a couple of questions. Sandra [Sandra Sobieraj, Associated Press].

Situation in the Middle East

Q. Mr. President, Saudi officials have taken strong issue with your characterization of Prime Minister Sharon as a man